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ABSTRACT

The High School Self-Renewal Program is a multiphase program designed to facilitate individual school improvement. In this document the various stages of the Renewal process, as adopted by Bay Ridge High School, New York, are outlined. Both cabinet level and school level processes are described. The cabinet level entry stage was characterized by cooperation among the principal and assistant principals. In the diagnosis phase, three initial problems were defined as targets of Renewal. They were: the need to improve the format of a data sheet for students, the need to regulate the elevator schedule so teachers would not be late to class, and the need to set up a study room for teachers. These problems were investigated as a result of the planning and research and development stages. Implementation and evaluation of problem solving approaches could then take place. These same steps were then repeated at the school wide level. A questionnaire distributed to faculty members in the diagnosis stage is included in this report, as is a newsletter. Alternatives proposed by the principal for reorganization in the planning stage are also included. The additional stages (implementation, evaluation, and institutionalization) at the school wide level are described. (Author/GC)

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A CASE HISTORY: Renewal Grows from Cabinet-Level to School-Wide Application at Bay Ridge High School

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CABINET-LEVEL ENTRY

Bay Ridge first became involved in Renewal when the principal and several assistant principals attended off-site Renewal workshops. The principal invited a Renewal consultant to come to the school and work with the cabinet. The principal and the cabinet agreed that the cabinet should work through the first six stages of the Renewal process before involving faculty and students. The goal was to learn the Renewal process by selecting a few relatively simple problems that might lend themselves to short-term solutions. The cabinet agreed to decide by consensus which recommendations would be submitted to the principal for final approval.

Diagnosis

Through brainstorming, the cabinet developed a list of problems. Each cabinet member then questioned the members of his or her department to learn how the cabinet could be more helpful to teachers on a day-to-day basis.

From among many suggestions, the cabinet pinpointed three feasible areas as initial targets. They were: the need to improve the format of a data sheet for students; the need to regulate the elevator schedule so teachers would not be late to class; and the need to set up a study room for teachers. Since the targets selected aimed at readily soluble problems, these solutions became apparent in the diagnostic stage and served as practice for the next round of problem solving when more difficult problems would be tackled.

Planning

Some cabinet members volunteered to investigate ways to implement each of the three solutions.

Research and Development

One of the three areas—the modification of the student data sheet—seemed the most appropriate for work during the Research and Development stage. The volunteer cabinet members investigated data collection methods in other schools to recommend improvements on the Bay Ridge data sheet.

Implementation

The cabinet and the principal agreed on designation of responsibility and timing for the implementation of each of the three improvements. Each was readily and rapidly implemented.

Evaluation

At subsequent meetings, a review of possible implementation strategies was conducted. Establishing a study room for teachers was judged to be the improvement that was most easily implemented. The review revealed some additional problems with the elevator schedule and the data sheet. The elevator operators reported that demands were made on the two elevators not only by teachers but also by persons making deliveries to the school. To insure that teachers were moved promptly during class changes, one elevator was reserved for teachers only. The student data sheet involved the most time for development but it has proved to be so useful that the Borough Superintendent has asked that it serve as a model for other schools in the Borough.

Evaluation of the Renewal process itself was favorable and the cabinet decided to initiate a school-wide effort. At that time, four months had elapsed since the Entry stage started.

SCHOOL-WIDE ENTRY

The cabinet agreed that the Renewal stages should rapidly be carried out again, this time using Diagnosis for a comprehensive canvas of the entire faculty. Since it was near the end of the Spring term, it was decided that students would be involved the following Fall. The cooperation of the school's chapter chairperson for the United Federation of Teachers union was sought to enable the cabinet to work closely with the faculty.

Diagnosis

A questionnaire based on the cabinet's Diagnosis was sent to all faculty members and the results were analyzed by a subcommittee of the cabinet. Figure A shows Bay Ridge's Diagnosis Questionnaire. Figure B is a newsletter reporting on the formation of task forces designed to elicit additional volunteer participants from staff.

Planning

Each task force started Planning in June and continued during the Fall term. The cabinet also worked independently to consider the necessary reorganization of departments due to severe budget cuts. The principal initiated brainstorming with the cabinet to generate possibilities for cutting down the program. Figure C shows alternatives proposed by the principal for consideration by the cabinet.

After discussing the "brainstorm" suggestions, the principal and the cabinet agreed to re-align the departmental structure, thus combining some departments under one chairperson instead of two. The proposal would save the cost of an additional chairperson and cover some of the teacher losses due to budget cuts. This major reorganization illustrates a much more radical change than those resulting from the initial Renewal "practice effort" involving the elevator schedules, the student data sheet and the teacher's study room.

Implementation

The new organization of the departments was implemented in September, 1976, by the chairpersons.

Evaluation

The cabinet is evaluating the new departmental organization throughout the 1976 Fall term.

Institutionalization

The planning task forces will continue to work to recommend specifics for Implementation.
In addition, a parallel structure of students will be created, so students may become involved actively in the Renewal process. The Renewal process will continue to be recycled in different structures of the school as progress dictates.

BAY RIDGE HIGH SCHOOL

DIAGNOSIS QUESTIONNAIRE

May 5, 1976

Dear_____:

Several weeks ago, your chairman spoke with you concerning ways to make working conditions better at Bay Ridge. Out of these discussions came the change in elevator schedules which allows for better service at the beginning and end of periods and the teachers' workroom in Room 106. The Pupil Information Card which hopefully will reduce clerical duplication is being worked on and a draft should be ready soon. Other, more long-range items which you discussed have been the topic of a series of cabinet meetings. A proposal has been made that a number of task forces be organized to study how problems can be met in many areas.

The problem areas which you have suggested for study and around which task forces can be organized are listed below. The questions are those which have been raised in each area.

A. Curriculum

1. Basics - How can an emphasis on basic skills be implemented? Which areas should be included?

2. Electives - What electives are needed? Which should be maintained in the face of new cuts? How can new electives be developed?

3. Cutbacks - What adjustments should be made?

4. Special Programs - Can the role of special programs be assessed in relation to the total school picture? Are there any programs which might be eliminated? Is there duplication? Are there new programs which should be tried?

5. Weighting of grades - Should the more rigorous subjects be given additional weight in school average to protect the better student? If yes, how should the weighting be arrived at? Advantages? Disadvantages?

6. School Tone - How can school tone be improved? How can pride in school and achievement be emphasized and fostered?

Figure A

B. Organization and Administration

1.	Department Structure - School Organization	- What different modes of school and department structure are in operation in other schools? What combination of departments or programs would provide greater flexibility and effectiveness?
2.	Annex	- Are there different groups of students who could pursue studies in the annex to maintain a high level of population there? What other contingency plans could be developed for the use of the annex?
3.	Home Room	- Are there ways of improving the home room? Other means of handling home room work?
4.	Programming	- What are other philosophies of programming? How do we implement semi-annual organization in face of cuts? Role of data processing?
5.	Data Processing	- What are the services which could be used to lessen the amount of clerical work? Cost? Are there ways of using the in-house computer we now have? What ought to be included? Computerization of attendance procedures?
6.	Supervision in Classrooms	- How can teachers be helped to the greatest extent? What resources -- both in and out of school -- could be brought into play?
7.	Modular Scheduling - cycles	- Advantages? Disadvantages? 9-week cycles? 12-week cycles? What happens to curriculum in cyclical organization?
8.	Student and School Profiles	- What areas of the borough are Bay Ridge students coming from? Are there patterns we can trace? What do they bring with them in the way of skills, knowledge, etc.?
9.	Survival	- What can Bay Ridge High School do to survive in face of increasing dollar cuts? What adjustments are possible? Desirable?

There may be other areas which you think should be investigated and these can be added.

Once the task forces have analyzed the problems, suggestions will be presented by the Task Force to the cabinet which will, in turn, make concrete proposals to Miss Leonard. Reports to the entire faculty on the status of the different committees will be made periodically.

Some of the problems listed above are obviously long-range items but there are many which might lend themselves to implementation as early as the Fall term.

Figure A (continued)

Please indicate your interest in working on any of these task forces by indicating your choice on the stub below. Our aim would be to hold the first meetings of these task forces no later than May 14th.

The following guidelines have been suggested as a means of including segments of the school population on these task forces:

1. Inter-disciplinary groups should be established for items dealing with curriculum.

2. That the constitution of a Task Force be specific to the task (i.e., teachers, students, etc., where necessary).

3. Those constituencies within the school which would be most affected by the specific Task Force should be included within it.

4. The goal would be to work for small successes at the start.

5. That the chairperson of a Task Force be an AP or teacher.

6. That the time for meetings of the Task Force would be set by the individual Task Force.

7. That all members of a Task Force receive adequate recognition.

8. Other guidelines adopted by an individual Task Force.

Your chairman will be happy to discuss any of these task force options with you -- to give you more information and to answer questions you may have.

Please return the stub below to Mr. Fallon no later than May 10th so that we can plan the first meetings for May 14th.

Sincerely yours,

_____
Joan M. Leonard
Principal

Detach Stub Here

Please return this stub to Mr. Fallon by May 10th.

_____
Name

I would like to serve on the following Task Force(s). (Please list in order of preference.)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

I would suggest the following as topics for possible additional Task Force(s):

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Figure A (continued)

BAY RIDGE HIGH SCHOOL
TASK FORCE NEWSLETTER

May, 1976

A word of thanks to all the members of the faculty and staff who responded to the notices of task forces and the subjects of each. Of all of the possible topics, four received a show of interest that was sufficient to get started. The first meetings were held on May 14th and a brief report is appended below. If, as you read this over, you feel that you would like to take part in any of the Task Forces listed, please do so. The acting chairperson of each Task Force will be glad to tell you when the next meeting is scheduled. All Task Forces will be meeting on Friday, June 4th, and your presence then or at a subsequent meeting will be most welcome.

School Tone Task Force

Present: Mr. Bellavia, Chairman; Miss Ventriglia, Secretary. Mrs. Altman, Mr. Brater, Mrs. Cranston, Mrs. Diemert, Mr. Fallon, Mrs. Von Gerichten.

At its first meeting, the committee identified the following problems as affecting the school tone which members of the committee felt required attention: Teacher and student morale; communication; lack of cleanliness around the building; school image vis-a-vis the community; need for pupil orientation. The committee plans to rank these in order of priority and then to establish strategies to deal with the problems. The suggestion was made to include students on this Task Force. The second meeting has been set up for June 4.

Electives - Selectives Task Force

Present: Mrs. Sheehan, Acting Chairperson. Mr. Kaplan, Mrs. Kip, Mrs. Papaleo, Mrs. Wengrow.

The problems identified were: exploration of areas of selectives; possibilities of parallel programming; exploration of modules within the school year; problems with present marking periods; interdisciplinary approaches. The committee discussed the role of basics within an elective program and will be exploring ways to implement a full program of electives and selectives which might include parallel programming, use of contracts, use of modules. Next meeting: June 4th.

Basics Task Force

Present: Mr. Dalfino, Acting Chairman. Miss DeFazio, Mr. Gottlieb, Mrs. Gray, Mrs. Juliano, Mrs. Klein, Mr. Ostrowsky, Mr. Rossiello.

The committee raised the following questions: What basics are we teaching well now? What basics should be incorporated this Fall? What long-term plans? How do we evaluate our teaching of basics? The growing use of competency examinations and the concept of competencies was discussed and marked for further exploration. Each member of the committee will be exploring desirable competencies within each subject area and will report back to the Task Force at the June 4th meeting.

Weighting of Grades Task Force, Annex Task Force...Reports to follow

BAY RIDGE HIGH SCHOOL
Cabinet 'Brainstorming' Letter June 4, 1976

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The following items were offered for consideration as alternatives to explore as we prepare the school program for next year. They are categorized into four (4) major headings. Will you please review them all -- indicate which you think are the most viable for further consideration. Also, please indicate the trade-off value of some, e.g., if we do one, must another be eliminated, added, etc. I would appreciate your returning this to me by the afternoon of June 11th.

Many thanks for your continued involvement in this entire budget projection process. I know that the work is time-consuming. However, I need your thinking on this to help me make the scheduling decisions.

Joan M. Leonard
Principal

Auditing

1. In-school internships
2. Credit for out-of-school jobs
3. Independent study - research papers
4. Contracts for students with high absence
5. Credit for passing competency exams
6. Credit for leadership class
7. Exemptions from requirements by exam
8. Home Economics internes.

Elimination

1. Reduce terms of Phy. Ed. requirements for passing students
2. Shorten school day at main
3. Limit number of classes chronic failures
4. Eliminate general science
5. Eliminate lab. tech.
6. Drop repeaters
7. Drop electives

Postponement

1. Hold Eco. & A. Studies for senior year only
2. Postpone Music Appreciation
3. Postpone World Studies
4. Postpone Health to Term 11

Administration Considerations

1. Program special classes -- e.g., reading, at end and beginning of day
2. Alternate weeks for independent study
3. "Live" vs. paper register
4. Higher registers first and last periods
5. Cut allowances
6. Fewer meetings
7. Program reversal task focus
8. New AP
9. Merge departments
10. Let students go out to lunch

Figure C9